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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: SOUTHEAST GOVERNORS CLAIM IMPROVED
INFRASTRUCTURE, EDUCATION

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Anambra State Governor Peter Obi told Poloffs April 12 that paved roads and the absence of teacher strikes were among his most important accomplishments; both were achieved despite wrangling with the State legislature and the persistent attempts by former Presidential Advisor Andy Uba to wrest control from Obi. Ebonyi State Governor Martin Elechi on April 14 said he prides himself on rehabilitation of boarding schools currently educating 5,400 students, on new water treatment facilities and on the construction of bridges that link farmers with markets. Both governors have introduced government or fiscal responsibility bills. End Summary.

Anambra: Persistent Political Wrangling Plagues Obi

¶2. (SBU) On April 12, Governor Peter Obi (All Progressives Grand Alliance, APGA) of Anambra State told PolOffs that his administration had achieved significant accomplishments in all sectors, despite Anambra's ranking as one of the poorest states in the country and the persistent attempts by former Presidential Advisor Andy Uba to wrest control of the state away from Obi. The Governor has submitted to the state legislature an executive bill on government procurement, of which he is proud. State schools held a full term with no teacher strikes, a achievement Obi credited to his administration's diligence in paying teacher salaries on time. In terms of infrastructure, the Commissioner for Works told PolOffs that 250 km of road and drainage had been completed in Obi's term, and an additional 420 km are under construction. Governor Obi also noted that the Nigerian Stock Exchange the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Corporate Affairs Commission the Consumer Protection Counsel and the Central Bank had all opened offices in Awka. Housing remains limited in Anambra due to a lack of funding for the Housing Development Corporation and the lack of available mortgages. As a result, people tend to live in Enugu (a neighboring state) and commute to work in Anambra, the Commissioner claimed. (Note: Enugu contacts claimed their state's better security environment also attracts residents. End Note.)

¶3. (SBU) Obi, whose educational background lies in baning, told PolOff that he attended Northwestern for his undergraduate and graduate degrees, and took additional courses at Columbia and Harvard. He decided to run for governor while walking with the Northwestern Dean along the shores of Lake Michigan. The Dean convinced him that he needed to contribute to the public good, and that he had the requisite skills to do so, Obi reminisced.

¶4. (SBU) However, at a meeting the same day of PolOffs' visit, local journalists criticized Obi's budget proposal, noting the large

disparity between it and the legislature's proposed budget and his perceived lack of interest in relationship-building with the People's Democratic Party (PDP)-controlled legislature. (Comment: Obi is notoriously tight-fisted with state funds, while the legislature reflects the interests of civil servants, for whom bigger budgets mean more available resources. End Comment.) Anambra has not held local government elections in nine years. Though all seated officials' tenure expired in 2003, the electoral commission's composition has been too contentious to resolve, the journalists said.

Ebonyi's Mild-Mannered Elechi Focuses on Growth

15. (SBU) In a meeting April 14, the soft-spoken Governor Martin Elechi (PDP) explained to PolOffs that he finds himself dealing with bureaucrats and legislators who neither understand the need for a budget, nor for due process, and must simultaneously educate and cooperate with them. The Governor's office requires a great deal of personal initiative and flexibility, Elechi claimed, describing the job as requiring continual compromise. He fretted that the federal government dictates what should be done, leaving governors little room to carry out their own ideas. After the federal government passed the fiscal responsibility bill, he said, the President asked the states to pass one as well. He revised the language of the federal bill and sent it to the State Assembly.

16. (SBU) Elechi laid out four main areas of focus for his administration: infrastructure, security, education and industry. Ebonyi is the first state in Nigeria to hold peaceful and successful local government elections since May 2007, in large part due to his reforms o

the local government administration mechanism, he claimed. In educational reforms, Elechi has advocated a return to boarding schools, and has thus far renovated two such facilities in each of the 13 local government areas (LGAs), plus an additional one for girls in the largest LGA, educating 5,400 students. The current water works that supply the state are working at around 25% capacity. The State has contracted with a Chinese company to refurbish the facility. Elechi is also developing two additional water treatment systems which will treat 100 million liters of water a day through an Israeli company. Elechi also claimed to have facilitated the construction of "roads and bridges of unity" across local rivers, to facilitate access by farmers to markets; nineteen have been planned and the N 23.4 billion (USD 200 million) contract for their construction was signed in February, he said. In order to provide a consistent supply of electrical power, he is exploring electricity generated from biomass to supplement what Ebonyi receives from the national grid. Finally, Elechi discussed his concept of relocating the state capital of Abakaliki to a site adjacent to the current city, for a clean start based on well-planned, modern infrastructure. For example, he stated, rock crushing operations currently located in town will be moved to an area further away to reduce pollution.

17. (SBU) Comment: PolOffs and Consulate drivers can vouch for the improvements in Anambra's roads, but other claims by both Governors remain unverified; assessing these Governors' claims will be a priority for upcoming trips to the region. End Comment.

HUDSON